

**CHILDREN'S PROBLEM BEHAVIOUR AND TECHNIQUES TO CLASSROOM
MANAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF A PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM IN KLANG
VALLEY.**

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Abstract

Classroom management is a skill that every teacher should be equipped well with. Although it is common for children to misbehave once in a while in classrooms, inability for teachers to handle the situation will make the problem behaviour worsen. The study explores some of the problem behaviour that occurred in a classroom in a preschool at Klang Valley area. An observation was done for data collection and it was held for 30 minutes during English lesson and 15 minutes during meal time. It was found that three children were obviously misbehaved during that time. The behaviours include walking around and not submitting worksheet, pushing one another in a line and also making noise with meal bowl and spoon. It was also found that back row of students were talking to each other while teacher was only paying attention to front row students. A few classroom management techniques were also suggested.

Keywords: Classroom management, making noise, observation, problem behaviour, qualitative study.

Background

Effective classroom management requires teachers to be skilful in his or her managing abilities, and not only depending on his/her teaching skills. Furthermore, classroom management is not just a term; it is an important skill for every teacher from preschool classrooms to university level. Good classroom management, is like doing a surgery, it requires precise which is involuntary layoffs and not rambling comments (Brunette, 2014). Teachers need to demonstrate self-discipline and good manners – do not get angry, do not insult, no blistering language. His or her management plan is never sadist; he or she lives by the law of sympathy, even when challenged by children to defy it (Brunette, 2014).

One of the important elements to be an effective manager is teachers need to be knowledgeable on what triggers problem behaviours in children. Thompson (2011) found that the most common children misbehaviour is that they do not follow directions from teacher or caregiver. In the circle time for example, children like to talk constantly with their peers and do not listen to teacher or caregiver. The reasons children behave such is because they cannot understand what teachers are talking about and maybe the language used by teachers are not understandable (Thompson, 2011). Other than talking with peers, children also like to put their hands or other body parts on their friends to distract them (Martinez, 2014). Other than that, hitting, kicking, catching or poking other peers are also common among children (Martinez, 2014). According to Morin (2014), children frequently like to test limits and also to break the rules set out by teachers or caregivers, to see how teachers or caregivers would respond to such behaviours. This was also supported by Martinez (2014) who suggested that children sometimes walk far from their seats to see how teachers will react upon that. Furthermore, throwing tantrums and arguing also is the most common misbehaviour in the classroom, especially in the preschool (Gaskell, 2014).

There are many techniques that teacher can use to manage children misbehaviour. According to Churchward (2009), one of the techniques is assertive I-Messages. Assertive I-Message is an element of Assertive Discipline where the messages are statements teachers say to children who misbehaved (Churchward, 2009). They are intended to give more understanding in explaining what is expected from a child (Churchward, 2009). This technique allows teachers to focus on the child's attention and the key element is on the behaviour a teacher is expected or wants, and not on the misbehaviour done (Churchward, 2009). For example, "I want you to do..." or "I need you to..." or "I hope you..." In a research, Churchward (2009) found that some inexperienced teachers who did a mistake by saying "I want you to stop..." only to find that this will often cause to confrontation and reject. The key pointed by the teachers was on the misbehaviour and the children are quick to refute: "I want you to stop..." or others statement and escalation to start (Churchward, 2009).

Other techniques teachers may use are the visual and verbal cues (Responding to misbehaviour, 2011). The technique suggested that teachers make a brief look into a child's eye when that child misbehaves. The brief pause of looking into the child's eye can strongly send the message to the child. Furthermore, verbal cues can be very simple such as saying the child's name. Reminding language is also used, however it is found to be effective prior to a child engagement in misbehaviour, and not when they are misbehaved. Teachers must first modelled expected behaviours so that children are aware of what is expected from them before reminding language is used (Responding to misbehaviour, 2011). Once teachers have modelled expected behaviours and given children chance to practice, a visual or verbal cue will frequently to stop the misbehaviour and to help the child get back on track (Responding to misbehaviour, 2011).

Logical consequences technique can also be employed by teachers to manage a classroom. This can help children to see and take the responsibility for the effects of their actions. Logical consequences different from punishment, logical consequences are related, reality, and respectful (Responding to misbehaviour, 2011). Related here simply means that the consequences are related to the misbehaviour, reality; is the consequences that are reasonably be hoped to do by children and respectful is the focus of communication between teachers and children; it should be on the misbehaviour and not of the child's temperament personality (Responding to misbehaviour, 2011).

Nevertheless, classroom management is more effective by preventing misbehaviour from happening than to manage those behaviours themselves. One of the early intervention strategies suggested by Alter and Conroy (n.d.) is the arrangement of classroom environment. A well-designed classroom with appropriate activities, materials and comfortable spaces for children can create an effective classroom environment (Alter & Conroy, n.d.; Powell, Dunlap & Fox, 2006).

Furthermore, according to Powell, Dunlap & Fox (2006), misbehaviours of children can be decreased when children are fully involved in activities. Therefore, to encourage children to engage in activities, variety of activities that are fun, creative and set based on children's level of development, interests and needs should be provided.

Other than that, schedule and routines can act as valuable tools to prevent children's misbehaviour in classroom and will allow children to know what is coming next (Powell, Dunlap & Fox, 2006). Consistent schedule for day's activities help children to predict what will happen at any given time and hence prevent misbehaviours to occur (Carson, 2014; Alter & Conroy, n.d.). According to Churchward (2009), children are able to know expectations of teacher on how they behave in classroom through rules that describe behaviours expected. Rules can teach children about appropriate behaviours and inappropriate behaviours in classroom (Alter & Conroy, n.d.). Powell, Dunlap and Fox (2006) described that consistent schedule along with clear rules about classroom behaviour and consistent consequences assist children to learn self-regulation skills.

According to Anderson (2014), teachers may involve children's opinions when establishing the classroom rules. This will make rules become meaningful as it promotes ownerships of children within classroom. The rules should be short, clear and use language that promotes positive desired behaviours, such as "respect others". Teacher also should assign appropriate rewards and consequences for the class rules and be consistent in enforcing the rules (Carson, 1999-2014).

Powell, Dunlap & Fox (2006) had stated that teacher also can interact with children in ways that encourage positive behaviour and prevent misbehaviour. For example, teacher can give positive attention and praise for children when they do appropriate behaviours which are powerful in shaping children behaviour.

Churchward (2009) also described that "Values are caught, not teach", which indicates that teacher should act as model to provide examples for children to follow. The way that "do as I say, not as I do" will make children feel confuse and hence may cause misbehaviour. For example, if a teacher wants children to be quiet in classroom when they work, then the teacher also should be quiet when moving around in the classroom.

Although there are a lot of preventive and management strategies suggested by the literatures, it is not clear what are the real methods used by Malaysian teachers in managing classrooms. Therefore, the study seeks to explore the misbehaviours that often done by Malaysian children and what are the management strategies used by teachers in preschools.

Research Methodology

A classroom of newly enrolled students of 4 and 5 years olds in a Kindergarten at Klang Valley is chosen for this purpose. There were 14 children in the classroom, 12 of them are Chinese, one is Malay and another one is Indian.

Classroom observation was done as data collection. Both teacher and children in the class were being observed for 30 minutes, from 10.00 to 10.30am during English lesson, and also during 15 minutes of meal time. Anecdotal record was done for the purpose of data collection.

Permission was obtained prior to the observation. A few visits were done to the preschool to familiarized the children with the researchers to avoid them behave differently when being observed.

Results and Discussions

Based on the observation done, it was found that there are few problem behaviours that occurred in the classroom. Two children were notified as showing more aggressive problem behaviour than others, namely Boy A, Boy B, and Girl A.

a. Walking around and refuse to submit worksheet

During the observation, Boy A, who was walking around and refused to submit the worksheet given by his teacher. It is believed that he is seeking for teacher's attention. It is because children will act and do anything out when they are not able to get attention from their teacher, as even if this is negative attention, but, it's still an attention (Goldsmith, 2010). According to Morin (2014), children like to walk around while learning because they want to test their limits and try to break the rules set out by teachers or caregivers.

It is also believed that he was seeking for power as he said "I won't do what you say! You can't make me!" to his teacher, as he wanted to show that he is also in control (Responding to Misbehaviour, 2011).

b. Making noise

During meal time, Boy A made some noise by talking loudly and knocking things with his bowl and spoon. It is believed that those actions are due to boredom. Young children can often play by themselves for a certain time when they are in boredom (Why Young Children Behave and Misbehave, n.d.), Boy A seemed to be entertaining himself by knocking his bowl and spoon. It is better if the food is ready during meal time to avoid children from waiting for too long. Powell, Dunlap and Fox (2006) described that consistent schedule along with clear rules about classroom behaviour and consistent consequences assist children to learn self-regulation skills.

After meal time, back at the classroom, children who were sitting at the back row were talking and making noise as the teacher was only paying attention to the front row. This might be due to the reason that children will often misbehave when they have a feeling to compete for attention from others (Why Young Children Behave and Misbehave, n.d.). The feeling of being ignored by the teacher would also lead to such behaviour of seeking her attention. Powell, Dunlap & Fox (2006) suggested that the interaction between teacher and children will encourage positive behaviour to prevent misbehaviour. For example, teacher can give positive attention and praise children when they do appropriate behaviours. These are powerful methods in shaping children behaviour.

a. Pushing and hitting one another

There was one incident where Boy A, he was pushing Boy B, and Boy B pushed Boy A in return, when they are in a line to wash their hands before eating. Accidentally, another girl at the back, Girl A, was also moved by that incident. This has made Girl A hit Boy B. The aggressive behaviour of the boys might because over-stimulating as there are too many children at one shot. Furthermore, Girl A who hit the Boy A is might because of her in extreme frustration or anger

mood (Munson, n.d.). When a young child kicks, bites or fights with another child, it is likely that he or she is having trouble expressing feelings in words (Behaviour problem, 2006).

Conclusion

The results showed that there are a few misbehaviours occurs in the classroom, namely walking around and refusing to submit worksheet, making noise, and pushing and hitting one another. A few reasons could lead to such behaviours. Those behaviours are seemed normal to be done by children, but classroom management by teachers is important in making sure that children can have a better learning environment and teaching and learning process could take place smoothly.

There are a few classroom management skills that could be adopted. According to Churchward (2009), one of the techniques is assertive I-Messages. It is used to explain of what the children is supposed to do (Churchward, 2009). For example, “I want you to do...” or “I need you to...” or “I hope you...” This can be applied to the Boy A, who was walking around and refuse to pass up the worksheet at the beginning. Teacher can say, ‘I want you to sit down properly and wait for teacher to collect the worksheets’ rather than only ask the child to ‘sit down properly’.

Teacher can also apply the visual cues to the children who were sitting at the back of the classroom and talking to each other while the front row children were dancing. A visual cue will frequently to stop the misbehaviour and to help the child get back on track (Responding to misbehaviour, 2011). As long as the teacher simply to seeing briefly into the child's eyes can strongly send the message to children (Responding to misbehaviour, 2011). When teacher uses her eyes to approach the children who were talking at behind, it can lead them get back on track by stop talking and then join into the dancing again.

Furthermore, Feierabend (2009) states that when a child is hitting the others, teacher has to provide sufficient time to allow the children to calm down first before that teacher could talk to her or him. Whenever the child is able to focus and listen, teacher can look to the child in the eye level and let the child know that hitting is not acceptable and ask them the reasons for hitting and to use words instead (Feierabend, 2009).

According to Morin (n.d.), another technique that could be applied is redirection. It can be applied to Boy A, who was making noise and playing with bowl and spoon while waiting for foods. At this point, teacher can redirect the boy from playing with the bowl and spoon by providing him something else to do such as wipe the table before teacher put the food inside the bowl rather than verbally warning him to sit still.

In the case of Boy A and B who were pushing each other when they were in line, teacher can use time-out as a technique to manage the behaviour (Responding to Misbehaviour, n.d.). Time out is a technique where a child is placed in a corner away from the peers but within the teacher’s sight for a few minutes until the child is able to regain self-control, and whenever he regains control, teacher has to help him re-join the group and then praise him for his improved behaviour (Responding to Misbehaviour, n.d.).

Implication of the study

The study recognized a few of children's misbehaviours and available techniques to be used to overcome these misbehaviours. Overcoming children's misbehaviours is crucial, as Hinkcs-Dellcrest (2014) stated that it's been shown that children who had been identified as hard to manage at young age have a 50 percent of chance to convert to severe behaviour problems when they go to adolescence stage.

Classroom management creates the sense of fairness in children environment. Teacher as a role model should create the environment of fairness in a classroom that takes into account all children and each one of them by paying attention to them and not being bias or having favouritism. This also benefits the society because children who learn to be fair will also treat everyone impartially. Peace is one of the benefits that relates to fairness. When children get the sense of fairness then they will be calmer and comfortable with the environment that surrounding them. This is because they know they will be treated fair and they can go through their day without interruption, drama and tension. (Linsin, 2011)

Besides that, trust is also important for children. Classroom management can build trust between children and teacher. When you really get to your word, your trust with students will become more powerful every day. Teachers should think and stick to their words. When rules are made, they should be implemented consistently. By doing this, children will be able to trust their teachers as the teachers provide stable and consistent guidelines (Linsin, 2011).

In addition, classroom management also builds kindness and respect in the classroom environment. In any way if a child misbehaves, teachers should be firm and correct the child's mistakes without scolding him or her.. This kind of attitudes will let the children know that although they did wrong, they can still be forgiven and someone will help them do it correctly. (Linsin, 2011). Effective classroom management will also leads to the attitude of respect by children to their teachers as the teachers are dependable and consistent.

In conclusion, children will gain benefits in the classroom management and they will get to use all the benefits and knowledge when they work in the society. Teaching children to have self-control and self –regulation while they are still young will make them to become better citizens in the future.

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